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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: JUNE 19, 2009

Summary: Prime Minister Gilani's decision to "withdraw Carbon tax on CNG (compressed natural gas)," recently proposed in the Federal Budget, dominated headlines in all newspapers on Friday. All newspapers highlighted report that the "suspected U.S. drone strikes killed 12 Taliban in South Waziristan." Security forces' claim of "killing 34 more Taliban militants in the ongoing operation in Swat and Dir districts" was also front-paged by all major newspapers. Defense Minister Mukhtar's statement that the "operation in Swat valley has almost ended and IDPs from the region will start returning to their homes from tomorrow (Saturday)" received prominent display. Foreign Minister Qureshi's remarks that "Pakistan did not seek time from India" for crackdown on the terrorists involved in Mumbai attacks, received extensive coverage.

The worst power breakdown in Karachi and some other parts of Sindh came under severe editorial comments. However, some newspapers ran editorials on the Pakistan-India talks, security situation of the country and President Zardari's meeting with senior EU officials and so forth. Commenting on the approval of the Kerry-Lugar bill, the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post," noted that the "passage of the bill shows that the U.S. government realizes that Pakistan is in deep waters and has to be helped out if the terrorists are to be eliminated." The prestigious English daily, "Dawn," observed that the "Taliban 'movement', clearly, is amorphous and its tentacles are spreading despite the state's recent military gains." The second-largest Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt," advocated that "President Zardari should take the nation into confidence about his meeting with Indian Prime Minister Singh and explain whether he really sought time [to combat terrorism] and does he consider jihad-i-Kashmir terrorism." End Summary.

News Stories

"Tax On CNG Withdrawn" "Dawn" (06/19)

"Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani announced on Thursday withdrawal of carbon tax on compressed national gas (CNG) and asked the Finance Ministry to make transparent the mechanism of its collection on petroleum products. In a reply to severe criticism by members during the budget debate in the National Assembly, the Prime Minister admitted that levying of tax on CNG would burden the lower middle class."

"U.S. Drones Kill 12, Hurt 10 In SWA" "The News" (06/19)

"Twelve persons were killed and 10 others sustained injuries when the U.S. spy planes attacked two suspected training centers of a Taliban commander in Sholam and Raghzai areas, eight kilometers west of Rustam Adda in South Waziristan Agency (SWA) on Thursday, Elders and officials of the political administration told 'The News.'"

"34 Militants Killed In Swat, Dir Upper: ISPR" "The News" (06/19)

"Security forces killed 34 more Taliban militants in the ongoing operation in the troubled Swat and Dir Upper districts, while seven others were arrested, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Thursday. According to the ISPR, security forces secured the area around Bridge-II, Kabal and Kotlai."

"Swat IDPs To Start Returning From Saturday: Minister" "Dawn" (06/19)

"Defence Minister Chaudhry Ahmed Mukhtar has said that the operation in Swat valley has almost ended and people displaced from the region will start returning to their homes from Saturday. The Minister said in an interview with DawnNews TV that after clearing Swat the military would go after militants in South Waziristan."

"Pakistan Did Not Seek Time From India: Qureshi" "The News" (06/19)

"Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said on Thursday Pakistan did not ask for more time for crackdown on the terrorists involved in Mumbai attacks. According to Geo News, Qureshi said all the outstanding issues would be brought on the table in the next Indo-Pakistan Foreign Secretaries' level talks."

"Pakistan Wants Meaningful Dialogue With India" "The Nation" (06/19)

"Pakistan on Thursday said it was satisfied with the outcome of meeting between President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in Russia but lasting peace could not be achieved in the region unless and until the core issue of Kashmir was settled. 'There were two tangible outcomes of the meeting between President Zardari and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. One is the agreement to resume the dialogue process at Foreign Secretary level and the other is the consensus between the two leaders to meet in Egypt on the sidelines of NAM summit next month,' said the Foreign Office spokesman, Abdul Basit while addressing his weekly press briefing."

"118 'Militants' Held In Darra, Bajaur" "Dawn" (06/19)

"Security forces arrested 118 suspected militants during operations in various areas of Darra Adamkhel and Bajaur tribal region on Thursday. Two terrorist camps and 13 houses were destroyed. The objective of the operation is to make the Indus Highway safe and to protect passengers from militants' attacks and robbery."

"40 Activists Of Banned Outfits Arrested" "Dawn" (06/19)

"In a crack-down, the Bahawalpur and Vehari Police arrested 40 people who allegedly remained associated with banned outfits and sectarian organizations, Bahawalpur Regional Police Officer Mushtaq Ali Sukhera confirmed to 'Dawn.'"

"Taliban Kill Two 'Spies'" "Daily Times" (06/19)

"The Taliban on Thursday killed two locals in Mir Ali subdivision, 24 kilometers east of Miranshah, for allegedly spying for the US. The body of Sher Nawab, a resident of Peshawar, was found on the Bannu-Miranshah Road near Shahab Flourmills, while Muhammad Nawaz, a resident of Miranshah, was found near Lakar Mandi in Mir Ali. Notes found near the bodies warned that anyone caught spying for the U.S. would meet the same fate."

"Female Bombers Ready To Blast" "The Nation" (06/19)

"The Punjab government has warned the law enforcement agencies of the possible suicide attacks by the female bombers. According to a letter issued by the Provincial Home Department, the Eastern Turkistan Islami Movement (ETIM) has been accused of preparing female suicide bombers in Waziristan, who could target any important

personality or a building."

"Waziristan Fallout May Arrive Karachi - Abdullah Shah Ghazi Shrine Closed Ahead Of Terrorists' Threat" "The Nation" (06/19)

"Waziristan operation fallout may be seen in Karachi as terror threats are looming and law enforcement agencies have barred the devotees from visiting famous Abdullah Shah Ghazi shrine located at Clifton Town, Karachi, informed the secret agencies."

"Pakistan Launches Softening-Up Strikes: U.S. Report" "Dawn" (06/19)

"Pakistan has already started softening-up operation in South Waziristan as a prelude to a major offensive, says a U.S. report. A prominent U.S. newspaper, Christian Science Monitor, reports that recent air raids and shelling in South Waziristan indicate that the Pakistani military is preparing to open a new front in its fight against the Taliban."

"Afghanistan Should Stop Use Of Its Soil Against Pakistan: Malik" "The News" (06/19)

"Minister for Interior Rehman Malik has said peace and stability in Afghanistan is in the larger interest of Pakistan and will ultimately clinch peace in the region. In an exclusive talk with the Geo TV channel on Thursday, he said Afghanistan should stop use of their soil against Pakistan. Supply of arms and ammunition must be halted across the border, he maintained."

"Pakistan Accedes To Pact Against Terror Financing" "Dawn" (06/19)

"Pakistan has acceded to the global pact against terror financing. With the accession to the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, Pakistan is now a party to 11 international conventions against terrorism. This demonstrates our commitment to eliminate the scourge of terrorism, Foreign Office spokesman Abdul Basit said on Thursday."

"Ulema Assure Full Support To Govt. Against Terrorism" "The News" (06/19)

"Ulema and Mashaikh have extended their wholehearted support to the government in its efforts to root out the menace of extremism and terrorism from the country. They gave this assurance to Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani in a meeting with him in Islamabad at his Parliament House Chamber on Thursday afternoon."

"Attempt To Undermine N-Capability To Be Resisted: Gen. Tariq" "Dawn" (06/19)

"Describing nuclear assets as the cornerstone of country's deterrence doctrine, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Tariq Majid said on Thursday that any attempt to undermine the core capability would be 'strongly resisted and defeated.' 'Let it be known that Pakistan is confident but not complacent. Our security apparatus prepares and practices contingencies to meet all such eventualities, and will not be deterred from taking any action whatsoever in ensuring that our strategic assets are jealously safeguarded,' he said in a speech at a convocation of National Defence Course, Armed Forces War Course and Allied Officers War Course at the National Defence University."

"Kerry, Lugar For Quick Passage Of Pakistan Aid Bill" "The News" (06/19)

"Top U.S. senators have called for urgently passing the Obama administration-backed aid bill to authorize \$1.5 billion annually for Pakistan, saying Washington's signal of support for the Pakistani people is vital in view of their ongoing struggle against militancy. Democratic Senator John Kerry, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and ranking Republican Senator Richard Lugar also expressed the confidence that the measure commonly known as Kerry-Lugar Bill and passed by the panel unanimously would be reconciled between the two chambers."

"Kerry-Lugar Bill," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (06/19)

"The passage of the bill shows that the U.S. government realizes that Pakistan is in deep waters and has to be helped out if the terrorists are to be eliminated.... Kerry made a lot of sense when he said that 'it is all the more important to get the money moving at this moment.'.... The passage of the bill can be regarded as the first right step in the backdrop of the on-going full-scale military operation in the Malakand division. The re-settlement and rehabilitation of the IDPs is also a massive task that needs financial help."

"Wheels Within Wheels," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (06/19)

"The full ramifications of the dangerous game played by Pakistan's security establishment over the past few decades are now being felt where they hurt the most: at home, on our own turf. Misguided policies of strategic depth in Afghanistan created a cadre of highly trained and motivated militants who are now beyond the control of their original keepers.... Their guns, as we speak, are trained inwards and terrorism within the borders of Pakistan is the curse of the day.... The Taliban 'movement,' clearly, is amorphous and its tentacles are spreading despite the state's recent military gains."

"Zardari's Assurance To Manmohan Singh: Government Should Clarify The Real Situation," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (06/19)

"Speaking with journalists, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said that Asif Ali Zardari sought time to combat terrorism in his meeting with Singh in Russia.... An attempt has been made to create doubts about Asif Ali Zardari that he considers Kashmiris struggle as terrorism.... As far as America is concerned, it is now an open strategic ally of India. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said the other day that relations with India will be enhanced dramatically.... On his return from Brussels, President Zardari should take the nation into confidence about his meeting with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and explain whether he really sought time [to combat terrorism] and does he consider jihad-i-Kashmir terrorism."

"Now A Soft Approach," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (06/19)

"What Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said on Wednesday indicates that New Delhi hopes to achieve through a soft approach what it has failed to do by repressive methods.... Another aspect of the soft approach is a possible reduction of the security forces currently deployed in Occupied Kashmir.... Prime Minister Manmohan Singh says he entertains the vision of a cooperative Subcontinent.... The sooner Dr Singh sees the ground realities, the better for everyone."

"Aid, Not Trade," an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (06/19)

"So far, response to the call from international humanitarian agencies to offer emergency help has been somewhat slow - and over the last week fears have been expressed these people could be forgotten. That would amount to a human tragedy, but also a calamity for Pakistan.... According to some reports, in the camps there are a large number of women and children on their own. In many cases, husbands have gone missing or are feared dead. These families worry too about the future after the immediate crisis is over and how they are to manage without the support, however rudimentary it may be, that is available in camps."

"Vague Promises, As Usual," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (06/19)

"Mr. Zardari is absolutely right when he says "half the war against

militancy" is to win the hearts and minds of the people. And while the EU apparently understands well how favorable an impact Pakistan's economic development can have on the issue and, as a consequence, on relieving the European nations of the threat of terrorism, their leaders somehow fight shy of taking practical steps."

"Trade Access To European Markets," an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro-Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (06/19)

"President Zardari is hundred percent right when he says that we do not need aid but access to European markets which would be a permanent source for the growth of our economy and industry. It would be a great victory if President Zardari succeeds in getting Pakistan access to EU markets."

"What's Pakistan Being Taken For?," an op-ed by Ayaz Amir in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (06/19)

"Pakistan is key to America's salvation in Afghanistan. Without the Pakistan army actively engaged in the border regions called FATA, American and NATO forces in Afghanistan would be hard-pressed to sustain their ground. Any innocent could be forgiven for thinking that given this crucial role some gratitude and some ungrudging help would come Pakistan's way. But what the United States is pleased to offer in the shape of the Kerry-Lugar bill is peanuts: 1.5 billion dollars a year, for five years. This is being dressed up as an act of unparalleled generosity, which is scarcely surprising given that those who give, even if very little, are apt to flatter themselves by making it appear more than it is. But what is surprising is that we are proving to be the chumps that we always tend to be when dealing with America. Instead of looking cynically at the Kerry-Lugar bill and running a fine comb through it, we are behaving like a latter-day Uncle Tom, grateful for the small change (in relative terms) we are about to get, almost like a tip for services rendered."

"Chasing Thoughts," an Muhammad Ijaz-ul-Haq in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (06/19)

"I have sat back, seen things as they develop to culmination phase, it will be a disservice to our sovereignty and blow to national cause if I fail to convey my conscience. My vision and wisdom guides me to realize that we have been forced to fight other's war. We have been dragged and compelled to act against ourselves. All along I have maintained, in the heart of hearts, that War on Terror is not our war, it was never our war and would never be so.... Since its inception, Pakistan today faces innumerable problems, internal as well as external - and perhaps the biggest challenge to its survival. It has become the Theatre of Operations - both overt and covert, by a host of hostile forces. All conspiring and converging to defang, destabilize and destroy this Ideological Islamic State.... With American nod, India in the lead, Israel in active connivance, Russia (Roped in Treaty of Friendship with India) licking its wounds inflicted by Pakistan in eighties, all longing and working for Pakistan's collapse."

"Disagreement and Uncertainty," an op-ed by Cyril Almeida in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (06/19)

"The only question going forward ought to be, how do we get out of the mess we are in? Yet, we can't begin to answer that in any remotely or meaningfully successful way if we are still engaged in a debate about something as fundamental as what lies at the heart of the instability here: The American presence or stand-alone militancy? Perhaps though the lesson in this for the other key players, the U.S., India and Afghanistan, is, for purposes of policy, to treat it as a mixture of both: their regional security interests are fuelling the instability here and it is also being perpetuated by the wrongheaded analysis of the Pakistan security establishment."

"Demise Of A Blessing," an op-ed by Tanweer Qaiser Shahid in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (06/19)

"All articles written on the demise of Maulana Sarfaraz Naeemi state that he was above sectarian prejudices. It is true that his life was spent striving for intra-faith harmony. However, the way Taliban, who belong to the Deobandi sect, have targeted Barelvi madressahs, personages and mosques brought about a noticeable change in Maulana Naeemi's life.... The way Raghib Naeemi, Sahibzada Fazal Kareem and other respected Barelvi Ulema condemned Taliban in their speeches, and the slogans they raised in support of the military operation shows that this sect will remain steadfast against the Taliban... The way thousands of people attended Maulana Sarfaraz Naeemi's funeral despite the countless hurdles shows that the majority of Muslims is not scared at all of the cruel Taliban."

"Corruption Culture: Transparency International's Report," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (06/19)

"Transparency International Pakistan has declared that elimination of corruption is not possible in the presence of the National Reconciliation Ordinance.... This is a fact that ruling elite's corruption and the act of being soft on corruption has promoted the menace.... On reinstatement as Chief Justice, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry took suo moto notice of NRO affairs and this matter is sub-judice.... The Chief Justice vowed to purge judiciary of corruption and due to his practical steps the judiciary is now at number 7 from number 3 in the list of corrupt institutions, which is an encouraging development. If he tackles NRO and the ruling elite's intentions are good then corruption cannot persist in our society."

"Ahmadinejad's Victory: A Humiliating Defeat To American Imperialism," an op-ed by Professor Shamim Akhtar in Pro-Jamaat-e-Islami weekly magazine "Friday Special" (06/19)

"U.S. has plans to change government in Iran, and to achieve this purpose, huge funds are officially reserved. If President Obama wants a serious dialogue with Iran, he needs to review this policy of creating troubles for Iran. U.S. is supporting terrorists groups inside Iran to destabilize the Iranian government. There is no denying the fact that minorities in Iran are not facing any problems there. However, the U.S. is involved in exploiting minority rights issue in Iran, especially the U.S. is extending support to Baloch groups in Sistan. Jandullah is active there with American blessings, and it (Jandullah) has accused Iranian government of killing of 400 Baloch people, therefore, Iranian government needs to address this issue right away."

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)
Patterson